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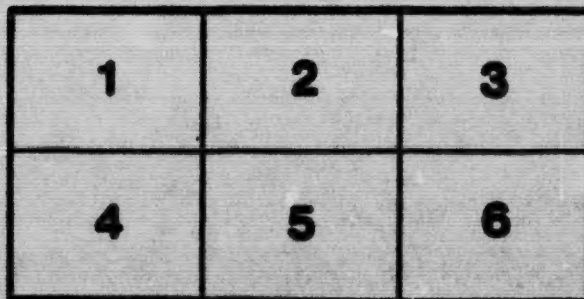
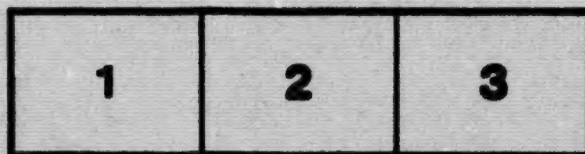
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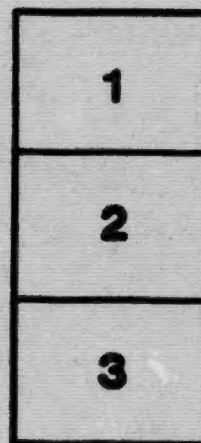
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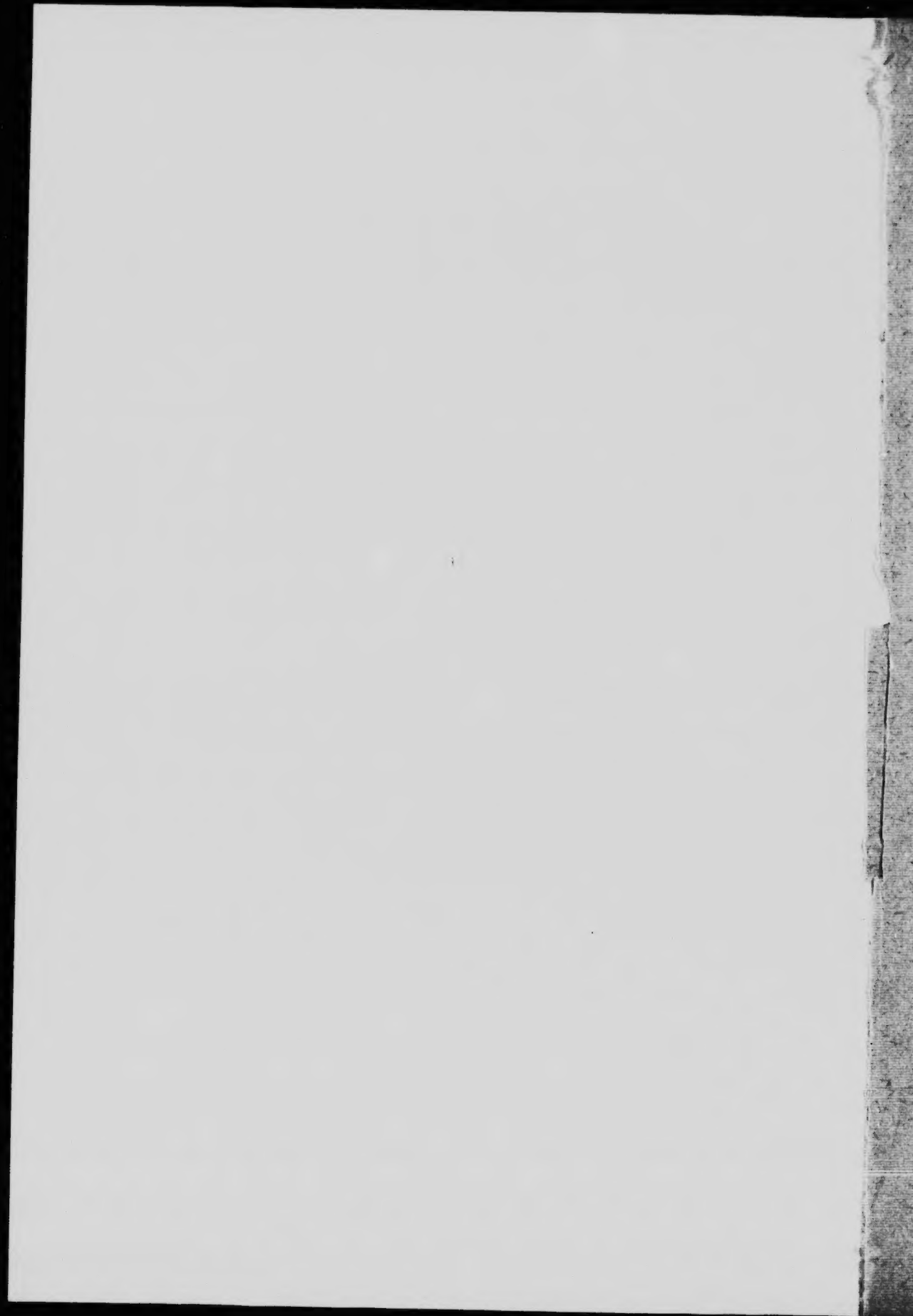
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**LIBERALS  
FIRST ADVOCATED  
CLOSURE**

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**THEIR STATEMENTS  
THEN AND NOW**

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Liberal members and Liberal Press were strongly  
in favor of Closure in 1908 and 1911,  
Laurier was pledged to adopt it  
if returned to power.

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**THEY DECLARED IT NECESSARY  
TO PREVENT OBSTRUCTION**

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# **LIBERALS WERE THE FIRST TO ADVOCATE CLOSURE — THEIR ATTITUDE THEN AND NOW**

The bitter opposition of the Liberal members of the House of Commons, and the Liberal press, to Mr. Borden's closure measure is entirely inconsistent with their attitude on the same question when they were in power. On the public platform and through the columns of the public press, the Liberals in 1908 and during the last general election campaign boasted that if returned to power Sir Wilfrid Laurier, as their leader, was pledged to pass a closure measure. They also repeatedly declared that the majority must rule and obstruction be made impossible.

It is a strange fact that the Liberals and those of their party press who have been the loudest and most vehement opponents of Mr. Borden's action in so amending the rules as to facilitate the conduct of public business, were, prior to their party's defeat in 1911, the strongest advocates of such a course.

The public statements of Liberal speakers and extracts from the Liberal press, contained in the following pages, defining their attitude then and now will prove illuminating though scarcely edifying. They prove conclusively, however, that the Liberals are insincere and their obstruction of Mr. Borden's "Naval Aid Bill" and their denunciation of the closure measure were decided upon for the sole purpose of making political capital and as methods of political expediency pure and simple.

## **Laurier or Fisher--Which ?**

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Sir Wilfrid Laurier declared in the House of Commons, on Wednesday, April 9, of this year, that he had always refused to introduce the closure.

But Hon. Sydney Fisher, a leading colleague of the then Premier, speaking at Waterloo, Que., on August 1, 1911, during the Reciprocity campaign, made the following significant announcement:

**"Now if we are returned to power, we will pass Reciprocity and we will also pass a measure changing the rules so that the business of the country may go briskly forward, without obstruction. It is only right that it should be so. Full investigation we believe in, but empty obstruction is a drag on the country."**

On August 19, 1911, at Magog, Que., Mr. Fisher said:

**"So long as a small minority or any group can take up the time of Parliament in order to hear themselves talk, it is impossible to avoid waste of time, and I give my pledge that, if the Laurier Government is returned again, the rules of the House will be changed. I consider present conditions inimical to the proper conduct of public business."**

At Knowlton, Que., August 21, 1911, Mr. Fisher said:

**"It was the intention of the Government, should it be returned, to change the rules of the House that such obstruction would in future be impossible."**



## **"Obstruction is a Vice," declared Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux**

Hon. Rodolphe Lemieux, then a member of the Laurier Government, used the following language in a speech delivered at St. Hyacinthe, August 13, 1911:

"In the regular order of things the present parliament should not have been dissolved until 1913. The liberty of speech is one of our most prized conquests, but the abuse of this liberty, that is obstruction, is a vice and should be extirpated from our political life, and when returned to power Sir Wilfrid Laurier will introduce a law providing for the exercise of closure in parliamentary debates."

## **Another Laurier Minister Prepared to Vote Closure**

One more of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's then colleagues, Sir Allen Aylesworth, speaking at Newmarket, Ont., June 2, 1911, declared as follows:

"Now some attention has recently been paid to that (the prevention of obstruction) by reason of some remarks uttered by Hon. Sydney Fisher, in the Eastern Townships. He was expressing no more than I would express, no more than every Liberal in the House would express. Things have come to a pass which threatens the destruction of representative institutions. I make the statement with a full sense of the responsibility upon me for what I utter, with the full sense that I speak as a member of Parliament and a Minister of the Crown. Under our existing rules of procedure there is no limit upon talk."

And further on:

"I must say that from what I have witnessed of what goes on session after session, I am prepared to vote closure, and to stay there to put closure through no matter how long that may take."



## **Hon. W. S. Fielding, Laurier's Minister of Finance, said: "The Majority Must Rule."**

Hon. W. S. Fielding, a responsible member of the Liberal Government, and for many years Finance Minister, made the following statement in the House of Commons during the session of 1908:

"No public deliberative assembly could be conducted upon any other principle than that the wish of the majority shall prevail. If that majority acts foolishly, harshly, then the remedy is in public opinion. I repeat the statement that in this or any other deliberative assembly no member can have a right in the deliberations of the House except what the majority gives him."

Further on he said:

"Every member of this House and every group of members has just as much right as the majority accord to them, and no more. That is true to-day as it was true then. But the trouble is my hon. friends opposite have abused their rights. The trouble is we have got into the habit of permitting an easy going method of procedure whereby hon. gentlemen opposite are permitted to delay the business of the House to an extent that would not be allowed in any civilized country outside of Canada. It was just such difficulty that compelled the mother of parliaments to adopt a procedure which allows the majority to rule."

## **Hon. Wm. Paterson Declared Closure Would be Endorsed by the People**

Another member of the Laurier cabinet, Hon. William Paterson, who dropped out of public life as a result of the Reciprocity fight of 1911, declared from his seat in the House of Commons, in 1908, as follows:

"If there is anything in the minds of the people at the present on which, when the Government ask for a verdict, they will get a favourable verdict by an overwhelming majority, it is this question of obstruction. I can tell you that the rules of this House must be revised in such a manner that while the amplest time will be given for the discussion of every question and the investigation of every subject, there must be a means devised whereby the hon. member for North Toronto and the little clique around him will not be able to keep this House sitting indefinitely. This is the issue that will be pronounced upon, and the party which will favor a revision of the rules in order that something within the lines of decency may be maintained and the country's money saved will be endorsed by the people."

# THEN AND NOW

The inconsistent attitude of the Liberals shown by statements made when in power and since their defeat.

Hon. Wm. Pugsley's statements of 1911 compared with those of to-day.

## MR. PUGSLEY IN 1911.

On July 24, 1911, Hon. William Pugsley, Laurier's Minister of Public Works, made the following statement:

"The threats which honourable gentlemen have made this afternoon, tend towards almost, if not quite, revolutionizing the theory which has hitherto prevailed. That theory has been that gentlemen would recognize not only their right but their duty and that is that **THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY SHALL PREVAIL**. That is recognized throughout this country as governing all assemblies, all meetings in which people are concerned, and at any meeting attended by the people of this country, whenever there has been fair and reasonable opportunity for the discussion of any question, **THE MINORITY HAVE ALWAYS RECOGNIZED THAT THE VIEW OF THE MAJORITY SHALL PREVAIL**, so far at all events as that body is concerned; and so in this Parliament. I ask is it not tending to destroy free parliamentary institutions for honourable gentlemen to rise, as they have risen to-day and threaten that this question shall not be allowed to come to a vote."

"I do not care what took place in 1896; I was not here in 1896. I SAY IT IS NOT IN HARMONY WITH THE PRINCIPLES WHICH OUGHT TO GOVERN PARLIAMENT ANY INSTITUTIONS THAT GENTLEMEN SHOULD RISE IN THEIR PLACES AND THREATEN, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEIR VIEWS ARE NOT THE VIEWS OF THE MAJORITY THAT THERE SHALL BE NO OPPORTUNITY TO VOTE UPON THIS QUESTION, and no opportunity, in a constitutional way, of giving expression to the views of the majority of this House. THAT IS REVOLUTIONARY; IT IS NOT IN HARMONY WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT."

## MR. PUGSLEY IN 1913.

The same Pugsley, now an aspirant to lead the Liberal Opposition, makes the following statement to-day:

"Let me say, Sir, that in the interests of the people of this country and in the interests of the minority, it would be better to apply the dagger than to strangle free speech. If this resolution should pass and we have an attempt made to apply the guillotine, I do not know that the guillotine is any more agreeable than the dagger."

And he also says:

"I object to the resolution because the rules which have prevailed for centuries have been established for the purpose of protecting the rights of the minorities and ensuring the priceless liberty of free speech in Parliament; I am opposed to it, Sir, because I believe this is an attempt to place the minority of this House absolutely under the control of the majority."

## **F. B. Carvell's Statement of 1908 and that of To-day Diametrically Opposed.**

### **MR. CARVELL IN 1908.**

F. B. Carvell, the Liberal member for Carleton, N.B., made the following statement on June 5, 1908:

"The action of these hon. gentlemen (the Opposition of that day) raises the question fair and square: Can the Government of this country, whether Liberal or Conservative, afford to be placed in such a position as that? CAN ANY GOVERNMENT AFFORD TO PLACE ITSELF AT THE MERCY OF AN OPPOSITION, AND VIRTUALLY DECLARE THAT, IF THE OPPOSITION DO NOT LIKE ANYTHING CONTAINED IN THE LEGISLATION THAT IS INTRODUCED, ALL THE OPPOSITION HAS TO DO IS TO WITHHOLD SUPPLY AND THE GOVERNMENT WILL BACK DOWN? Carried out in practice and you have a country ruled not by the majority but by the minority."

And again:

"I ask again: Can any self respecting Government afford to be placed in this position? I say there is only one solution to this question; IF THIS OPPOSITION, OR ANY OTHER OPPOSITION, CHOSE TO PURSUE SUCH A COURSE, THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE WILL BE CLOSURE. I am not the first one to advocate closure."

He stated further:

"Therefore I say that this is a matter which ought to be discussed thoroughly; and I believe that if the Opposition determine to persist in this unpatriotic, unworthy course, the next move the Government will have to take is to adopt the closure. And I say to the Government that in my opinion, while I think it is the only course they can pursue IT IS ONE THAT WILL BE SANCTIONED AND APPROVED BY THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. LET THE GOVERNMENT START IN AT ONCE AND CHANGE THE RULES OF THIS HOUSE, IF IT TAKES MONTHS TO DO IT IN ORDER TO ADOPT THE CLOSURE."

### **MR. CARVELL IN 1913.**

The F. B. Carvell of to-day, now a member of the Opposition, has the following to say of the closure:

"It is a matter of supreme importance to the people of this country that we should discuss it—that we should do more, that we should fight it. We ought to do everything that free men can do to show the iniquity of this rule being forced upon a free people."

He says also:

"There must be, I am sure, a few reasonable men on the other side, and I cannot believe there are half a dozen hon. gentlemen in the House, including members of the Government, who had the faintest idea of the real iniquity of the proposed rules as submitted to the House in this resolution by the Prime Minister."

## **Hon. Charles Murphy also Takes a Somersault**

When a member of the Laurier Cabinet, in the position of Secretary of State, Mr. Murphy declared closure must come to Canada. Now he refuses to be bound by it.

### **MR. MURPHY IN 1911.**

Mr. Murphy, as quoted in the Ottawa "Free Press" (Lib.) made the following statement at a public gathering on August 16:

"Under the rules of the House as they exist, the majority was at the mercy of the minority. If the Opposition chose to abuse their power, the Government is powerless to prevent it. Under these circumstances there was nothing left for the Government but to ask that the issue be submitted to the people and let the people decide. Hon. Mr. Lemieux said at St. Hyacinthe that some measure of closure would be necessary in order to make it impossible for the Opposition to obstruct the business of the country, and he (Mr. Murphy) was perfectly in accord with that proposition. The closure existed in Great Britain, in France and in the United States, and it must come to Canada."

### **MR. MURPHY IN 1913.**

In the course of a speech in the House of Commons on April 16, against Mr. Borden's closure resolution, he made the following statement:

"I claim that any rules passed in this way are unconstitutional and unjustifiable, and can have no binding force on the members of this House. I, for one, decline to be bound by them."



## **"Strong-Headed Tongue-Waggers"**

Hon. Frank Oliver, "the man from Edmonton," and Minister of Interior in the Laurier Cabinet, is nothing if not picturesque. Likewise his paper, the Edmonton "Bulletin." Both have a reputation for lurid language. Mr. Oliver during the debate upon the Naval Bill and the closure measure has earned the reputation of an inveterate blocker and obstructor. He repeatedly declared his emphatic opposition to closure.

Yet here is what Mr. Oliver's official mouthpiece, the Edmonton "Bulletin," had to say on May 11, 1911, on the question of obstruction:

"A group of strong-headed tongue-waggers have it in their power to hold up the course of business as long as they please, and to block indefinitely the passage of any measure, however large the number of their fellows favourable to it, and however warmly the public approve of it. The performance is purely a physical one, and leather lungs are the only qualification necessary, save a callous indifference to the rights of the too tolerant majority in the House and out of it."

## **The Most Influential Liberal Paper in the West, the "Manitoba Free Press" Favored Closure**

IN 1911.

"If a challenge for a trial of strength is made, the Government should meet it and fight it out to a finish, if it takes all summer and next winter too. The inevitable victory, when it comes, should carry with it the Closure which will take our Parliament out of the freak class and make it an assembly that can act as well as talk. The Canadian is the only British Parliament of the first rank which has not the closure. It is high time that it lost this undesirable distinction."

IN 1913.

"The ground which the Liberals are holding in regard to the question of naval policy is strong ground. Equally strong will be their ground in fighting against the imposition of the closure. There is no justification for a resort to the closure at this time."

# What "The Globe" Said

**THE TORONTO "GLOBE," THE ORACLE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND EDITED BY THE REV. J. A. MACDONALD, WAS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF CLOSURE IN 1911.**

## **THE "GLOBE" IN 1911.**

"The application of the closure to debate at Ottawa seems inevitable. The one Parliament that retains the Great Britain tradition of free and unlimited debate has during the past few sessions proved that the system is no longer applicable to modern conditions. Parliament in Canada, with all the vast and complex problems arising out of the settlement of a half continent to dispose of, cannot become a mere academic mutual improvement society. Debate must be a means, not an end. Liberty of speech in the Commons has degenerated into licence, and a dozen inveterate talkers bore a weary House with talks that were old two thousand years ago, until the wonder is that enough members can be induced to remain in the chamber to make a quorum."

## **AGAIN IN 1911.**

"The heat of the summer will do much to lessen the fighting spirit of the irreconcilables, and if they hold out through June and July, then August would be an excellent month for introducing that much-needed measure, a bill for applying the principle of closure to Parliamentary debate in Canada."

## **THE "GLOBE" IN 1913.**

"All the great authorities on British constitutional law and parliamentary practice are agreed that the adoption of closure has greatly and probably permanently changed for the worse the old time House of Commons, has lessened the dignity and usefulness of the private member, has proportionately and not usefully enhanced the power of the Cabinet, and has aggravated the tendency of the House to become a bear garden. Every member of the Canadian House of Commons must face the responsibility attached to making a similar change for the worse in one of the few remaining parliaments that have kept themselves free from factitious closure."

# The Ottawa "Free Press"

**THE OTTAWA "FREE PRESS," THE LIBERAL ORGAN IN THE CAPITAL, LIKE THE "GLOBE," DOES NOT HESITATE TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE WHEN NECESSARY.**

## **THE "FREE PRESS" IN 1913.**

"To the 'Free Press' the threatened attack on free speech in Parliament has been of as much concern as has the dangerous policy of direct cash contributions to the Imperial exchequer. We have held to the idea strongly that any attempt to adopt closure in the Canadian House, should be fought, constitutionally or unconstitutionally to the last ditch. We believe the Liberals would be justified in turning the Commons into a veritable 'bear garden' should such an attempt be made."

## **THE "FREE PRESS" IN 1911.**

"The kangaroo closure which was enforced in the British House on Tuesday, is the latest device known to Parliament of cutting the talk short and getting the business on, remarks the 'Manchester Guardian.' The need for some sort of closure has been evident of late in the Canadian Parliament, and the 'Guardian's' description is, therefore, of interest."

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